

"We have orders to arrest him and conduct him to the Governor, who has decided that he is to die. Can you tell us where he is to be found?"

"Certainly," responded the man, "But it is late; come with me and accept my hospitality for the present."

The soldiers willingly availed themselves of this offer and repaired to his home. Their host, according to Oriental custom, gave them a most cordial welcome. He brought water to bathe their feet, and provided them with an abundant, though frugal, repast. From time to time numbers of poor people presented themselves at the door, and the master of the house gave them, with sweet benevolence, a portion of the repast. So simple was his generosity that it seemed as if he were the father of all the poor who claimed his hospitality. His conversation, always refined and elevated, yet somewhat reminiscent of military life, had for these Roman soldiers a charm for which they could not account.

"How unfortunate," said they, "that to-morrow we are obliged to quit your hospitable roof in order to arrest that miserable agitator! Do you think he will escape us?"

"Have no fear," replied the host. "I myself will deliver him into your hands. Remain here as long as it pleases you."

The soldiers remained three days. They seemed unwilling to quit so hospitable a roof and such an entertaining companion. But the Governor would not excuse any further delay. On the third day, at the close of their repast, the leader said: "To-day I must ask you to conduct us to Longinus, whom we came to arrest."

"I am he," replied the old man with a smile, "and I am quite ready to follow you."

The soldiers were speechless with astonishment, while Longinus continued: "But you will allow me to repair for a few minutes to a neighboring apartment?"

A little later he reappeared robed in most beautiful white festal garments, according to the custom of the Orient.

"Death," said he, "will reunite me with Jesus Christ. It will be my nuptial day, my feast of feasts."